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IMPERIAL FEDERATION LEAGUE
OF AUSTRALIA

Addresses, 1909

**No. 2—Military Training
for our Schoolboys,**

...By...

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Imperial Federation League

OF AUSTRALIA.

OBJECTS OF THE LEAGUE :

1. To maintain the Unity of the British Dominions.
2. To Strengthen it in the future by SOME FORM OF FEDERATION.

FUNDAMENTAL RESOLUTIONS :

1. That the chief objects of the League be to secure by Federation the permanent unity of the Empire.
 2. That no scheme of Federation should interfere with the existing rights of Local Parliaments as regards local affairs.
 3. That permanent Federation can be secured and maintained only by a system of common defence, devised and eventually controlled by representatives from all parts of the Empire.
 4. That the details of any scheme affecting the common interests of the Empire can be properly considered only by conferences of representatives from all parts of the Empire ; therefore the establishment of such conferences should be a constant aim of this League.
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MILITARY TRAINING FOR OUR SCHOOLBOYS.

The Commonwealth of Australia lies so remote from the two centres of the world's greatest activities that those distant regions can have only imperfect conceptions of the facts and conditions of Australia and its white inhabitants—a race far from faultless; but a fine race, physically and mentally vigorous, fitting descendants of their forefathers, who went out with their lives in their hands to subdue the wilderness, and to make habitable places of the desert and the swamp. Such were the Australian pioneers: men who braved terrors, and overcame difficulties, to spread plenty and civilisation over a continent. Here on this soil have met, toiled together, and merged into a hardy Australian nationality, men of English, Scotch and Irish blood, besides other Europeans, and our brothers of North America. Here these elements of the world's foremost races have proved a happy admixture; and in many ways the strenuous natives of our land may hold up their heads with the proudest nationalities. In most ways in which they have made untrammelled effort, they are of good report. In art and literature they are holding their own. In journalism, their newspapers will stand comparison with those of the most advanced nations. In the world of sport, they have successfully faced the champions of the land where sport is indigenous. Of war we happily have little experience; but, when Australia sent her sons to the struggle for supremacy in South Africa, military critics ranked those untried soldiers among the first for courage, endurance, and intelligence. And how as to education? Fortunately, we may say that almost every Australian child can do much more than read and write; further, that a system is being developed by which any child of exceptional ability, or surpassing industry, aided by scholarships, may hold a key to all the doors of the Temple of Knowledge. Thus, the primary State school is already partly linked to the Secondary School, which is either a Grammar School or a Technical College; and a system of scholarships aims at uniting these two latter institutions to the University, making practically an almost free course from State school to University for a student of distinguished merit.

The policy of thus seeking to develop our "mute inglorious Miltons" and our scientific geniuses is a sound one. To produce, if possible, such men as Sir Humphry Davy, Lord Kelvin, Faraday or Edison, would be a world-wide benefit. What says Professor Huxley? "I weigh my words when I say that if by an expenditure of £200,000 we could produce a potential Faraday, he would be cheap at the money."

During the past forty years, education in Victoria has steadily, if not rapidly, progressed; and, better still, this advance in knowledge has been accompanied by an advance in moral status; as will be evident when we consider that, with a doubled population, there has been a falling off in crime; we built no new prisons—nay, we have closed some, and the remainder are generally only half full.

So much for *general* improvement; and now let me present three *special* improvements of Australian origin. First, then, the Land Transfer Act. Those who are familiar with law, or with the conveyance of landed property, know the costliness and complexity that vex the souls of buyers and sellers of land in England. Here, by means of the Titles Office, in which real property is registered, land so registered may be transferred in an expeditious manner, and at a cost of only a few shillings, by an entry into a Public Record, accompanied by the issue of a simple certificate. South Australia has to be thanked for this great improvement.

The second great measure I desire to note is Compulsory Education. Begun in Germany a century ago, but not followed elsewhere until in 1873 it was enacted in Victoria; thence spreading rapidly to the sister colonies, and next to the rest of the civilised world; but to Victoria belongs the honour of first establishing it in an English-speaking country; and thereby declaring that a parent should no more be permitted to starve his child's mind than to starve his child's body.

The third great measure is Military Training for schoolboys, or, as we call it, the Cadet System. For many years this had in effect existed in Switzerland; but Victoria was the first English-speaking country to introduce, as a general system, the military training of schoolboys; and it is of this that I desire specially to speak as a far-seeing measure, and a national benefit.

In a book published in 1872, entitled *The Switzers*, Mr. W. Hepworth Dixon gives a very interesting account of how in the Swiss Republic boys from an early age undergo

military training in the primary schools, the course being continued until the pupil leaves school, when, as far as drill and rifle-shooting go, he is fitted to take his place in the ranks of the State militia. The author speaks thus of the effect of such instruction:—"The truth is that the soldier learns his business in the school; not only exercises and drill, but the use of arms, the habits of obedience, order, silence, the power to listen and to speak; but yet those higher duties of a camp, the will to mingle class with class, to act in bodies with a single soul, to put down personal hopes and fears, and seek no object but the public good."

It appears that not boys alone, but Swiss girls also are a factor in national defence, and the author goes on to say that, for this purpose, girls are instructed how to stanch the flow of blood from a cut, how to dress a gunshot wound, and how to nurse the sick.

Though not quite within the scope of this paper, it may be interesting to add that the Swiss railway porters, guards, and clerks are specially drilled in companies for transport service. Might we not borrow an idea here?

In 1885, the Cadet Force was established in Victoria by the late Lt-Colonel Sir Frederick Sargood, when he held the combined offices of Minister of Education and Minister of Defence. That admirable citizen and far-seeing man conceived that, for the military training of schoolboys, time might be spared without detriment to school studies, and that such a step would be productive of great and good results. I had the honour of being consulted about the matter; and seeing at once the great object to be achieved, apparently at a trifling sacrifice, I told Sir Frederick that, while I saw immense advantage in the scheme, I would like first to consider every possible objection that might be urged against it; and accordingly we discussed fully and carefully every conceivable difficulty that might arise. Omitting minor objections, the principal ones appeared to be:—

1. Loss of school time.
2. Expense of uniform.

The first of these objections, I thought, might have weight with parents, though I regarded it as a trifling matter. The time spent at drill in the open air being likely to do so much good to a cadet's physique and vitality, seemed a fair equivalent for a small loss of book lessons. Years afterwards the officer commanding the cadets, Lt.-Colonel Gamble (who

rendered great service to the cause), made extensive enquiries, with a result that justified this surmise. He found that the average examination passes were not lower, but actually higher for those pupils who were cadets than for their class-fellows who were non-cadets.

The other difficulty—expense of uniform—was more serious. At first, it was proposed that the cadet should wear a coat adaptable to both civil and military dress. This was ultimately abandoned, a khaki tunic, trousers, and felt hat turned up at the side being adopted; a very serviceable and strong dress. But, though costing only 23s. altogether, it was expensive enough to shut out a host of boys. However, out of the Government capitation grant there was often a little money to help towards the cost of uniform of some lads who otherwise could not have joined the ranks. All the other supplies came from the Government, viz. :—

1. Belgian breech-loading rifle, known as the *Francotte*, about the length of a carbine; bore .23; Martini-Henry action; weight upwards of 5lb.; cost 54s.;

2. Small bayonet, to fit the same (judiciously blunt);

3. Leather waist belt, frog and pouch;

4. Cloth cape, for wet weather.

All these latter equipments were on loan, remaining the property of the Government. No doubt a much cheaper rifle could have been got, and the bayonet might have been dispensed with, as in this Corps the bayonet exercise was not generally taught; but, when taught, all its motions (except *Fix* and *Unfix Bayonets*) could have been practised with the rifle alone.

The officers, with the exception of a few inspectors of schools, were teachers. All passed a qualifying examination in infantry drill before obtaining commissions.

Other State assistance consisted in free railway transit when on duty, a small payment to officers in aid of their expenses, and, more important still, two permanent staff officers. One of the first of these was Lieut. Hoad (now our valued Major-General), who greatly helped the movement. The garrison instructors were also placed at the service of the Corps, to train the officers.

One distinguished officer, Major-General Sir Alexander B. Tulloch, Commandant of the Victorian Forces during the early days of the Cadet movement, is gratefully remembered for the interest he took in the Corps, and for his hearty advocacy of its interests. Victoria owes much to him.

Ex-Cadets aged 15 to 19 were enrolled in the "Senior Cadets," a battalion forming part of the service forces of the State, and being an ordinary infantry regiment on a volunteer basis.

When first established, the Cadet Corps was so little understood that many persons characterised it as "playing at soldiers"; for it was not at once realised that the movement had a serious purpose and a patriotic aim. Looking at it from the military standpoint, it offered this immense advantage that, during a lad's school days, when his time could best be spared, and when his mind was plastic to receive impressions, it taught him military drill; nay, more, it taught him, for a few shillings, what it would have cost pounds to teach him when he became an adult. This at least is a substantial consideration; and the enjoyment of the boys at their martial exercises shows us why they learn their drill so well.

As the movement became better understood, it grew very popular, spreading quickly throughout our States. A later development is the Naval Cadets, recently organised. It is probable and desirable that these also will obtain Government recognition, for a sailor, trained as on a ship of war, is a valuable asset of the Defence Force; he is a swordsman, rifleman, artilleryman, infantryman, as well as a seaman, and the last word includes in it great potentiality for handiness and resourcefulness.

Lately, we have heard much about the physical deterioration of the lower stratum of the population in manufacturing towns. Well, here is a way to check it by means of physical drill and military training in the open air. But there are other weighty advantages—both educational and moral. The fact of belonging to the Force, with its *esprit de corps*, and sense of responsibility, puts the Cadet on his good behaviour, and raises his self-respect. The training develops a smartness of manner and bearing, and begets a wholesome respect for authority. The Cadet learns to speak to others with respect, but without servility. Manliness and steadiness are practically taught and unconsciously absorbed.

We may again emphasise the fact that the Cadet system is absolutely the cheapest way of training a nation to arms;

but, important as is this consideration of great economy, there are yet greater advantages. In my estimation, the benefit to physique and moral character immensely outweighs all the advantage of economy. Thus, the well-drilled lad who shows quickened attention, prompt obedience, and reverence for authority, gives evidence of successful training—training which, by promoting intelligence and self-control, tends to advance a boy's future interests, and to keep him in paths of rectitude.

Had the wise founder of this system been spared until to-day to see the growth of his work throughout Australia, he might have felt that, of his many worthy deeds, none more than this entitled him to the gratitude of his adopted country.

One need say little more of these Cadets. You see them on many public occasions; and it should be noted that eminent visitors here, to whom they are a novel spectacle, are greatly impressed with them. When the Prince of Wales inaugurated the Federation of the Australian States, and when the American fleet visited our shores, this was, I understand, markedly the case. They were naturally surprised to see these young boys march with almost the steadiness of trained soldiers; and the visitors, mentally looking ahead, might realise that, a few years hence, these boys grown up would be a numerous potential citizen soldiery, an unpaid latent national guard, available whenever the call of duty and danger should summon them.

Of course, our Cadet system is very far from perfect; and we want to get under its influence all those boys who cannot afford to buy the uniform. May I offer a few suggestions for the increase of the Force, and for making it yet more economical? Here they are:—

1. First, I would make military training for boys compulsory by law.

2. Boys aged 10 to 12, to learn company drill, etc., and physical drill. No arms or uniform required.

3. Boys over 12, to learn battalion drill, etc.; physical drill with arms; rifle drill (including shooting); uniform to be worn.

4. A cheap rifle, something like the Winchester single-shot (.22 bore), would be sufficient, to shoot at small targets at short ranges; no bayonet.

5. Some rewards for special proficiency in drill. Say, for instance, free uniform for boys who could drill a squad successfully before the visiting military inspector.

6. The State grant might be higher for boys drilling with arms, perhaps even limited to them.

The value of the Cadets is not to be measured by the total number under training at any one time. That value depends on the total that have been trained. For example, some years ago, when the number of cadets in Victoria was about 4000, it was estimated that no less than 40,000 had been trained. Of those soldiers who went to the South African war, I was told that 60 per cent. had been cadets.

One more consideration. Much has been urged for compulsory military service. No doubt, as in Germany and elsewhere, such would prove an industrial burden; but, should it come, the burden could be immensely lightened with the aid of a Cadet system, through its previously training the soldier in drill and shooting—the two chief things he has to master.

If in certain quarters objection be taken to the system, as creating a military spirit, I would say, "All the better: let them have a *military*, not a *militant* spirit."

The institution of the Cadet Force has no aggressive purpose; it makes for peace, not for war; it is only the lowest building course in the structure of national defence. Yes, defence, not defiance, is its aim; and a country that makes no provision for this has not yet proved itself worthy of independent national existence.

We may be asked what connection has all this with Imperial Federation? There is an answer. Whether or not we aim at the great ideal of Imperial partnership, it is equally our interest and duty to improve our institutions to the utmost—to become stronger and better, and to fit Australia for the grand future destiny of a partnership in the great British Empire, with its glorious past and its ennobling associations.



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